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CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE MIDCAREER FELLOWS PROGRAM

The application window for the Midcareer Fellows Program closed on Friday, April 9, 2021.

Student Experience Research Network (SERN) invites applications to participate in a 15-month (summer 2021 – summer 2022) virtual Midcareer Fellows Program (MFP) funded through grants from the Bezos Family Foundation and Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. The MFP will support a community of scholars to collectively bridge equity-centered research on the structures (i.e., practices, policies, and norms) that shape students' experience of feeling respected as valued people and thinkers in school with current topics in federal and state policy. Fellows will advance their knowledge about policymaking and how research is taken up in policy, provide input that influences the construction of the fellowship, network with colleagues who bridge research and policy, and develop deliverables that target both academic and policy audiences.

The overall goal of the program is for fellows to apply their leadership, vision, and research lens in service of constructing new narratives about federal and state policy topics that strategically target one or more policy intermediary audiences – a powerful mechanism for shifting how issues are understood and responded to within policy.

The fellowship is designed for midcareer faculty at colleges and universities who received tenure within the last seven years, who identify as a member of one or more minoritized groups in the academy, and who conduct equity-centered (e.g., liberatory or participatory, asset-based, anti-racist) empirical research about the role of structures in shaping students' experience of feeling respected as valued people and thinkers in school.

Student Experience Research Network, formerly known as Mindset Scholars Network, is grounded in an interdisciplinary understanding that, in order to learn and thrive, students need to experience respect as valued people and thinkers — and that the structures (i.e., practices, policies, and norms) in education and society have inequitably shaped this experience of school depending on who students are and the opportunities they are afforded.

AWARD

The fellowship program begins in summer 2021 and ends in summer 2022. Fellows will receive up to $65,000 in support in the form of a grant to the applicant's institution. The award may only be used to cover salary (in the form of course buyouts) and related costs (e.g., employee benefits), a fixed $2,000 academic deliverable cost, and up to 15% indirect costs for AY 2021-2022 and summer 2022. It is not expected that fellowship activities during summer 2021 will require a reduction in teaching commitments. A 1-page letter of institutional support written by a chair, dean, provost, or other official is required, as is a completed budget and budget justification detailing the costs described above.

student experience
RESEARCH NETWORK

ADVISORS

- Sapna Cheryan, Professor of Psychology, University of Washington
- Thomas Dee, Professor of Education and Senior Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy, Stanford University
- Michal Kurlaender, Professor of Education Policy and Department Chair, University of California, Davis; Co-Director, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)
- Bethany Little, Principal, EducationCounsel
- Mary Murphy, Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences and Associate Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Indiana University Bloomington
- Na'ilah Suad Nasir, President, Spencer Foundation; President-Elect, American Educational Research Association
- Karen Pittman, Co-founder and Senior Fellow, The Forum for Youth Investment
- Vivian Tseng, Senior Vice President, Program, William T. Grant Foundation

OVERVIEW

Many entities form the ecosystem that is influenced by research evidence and shapes education policy agendas, priorities, and decisions. Among them are policy intermediaries, funders, and the media. Given their deep knowledge about the policy environment, how policy gets made, and the politics of policy, policy intermediaries (e.g., policy consultants, advocacy organizations, think tanks, and associations) play a particularly significant role in informing policy conversations and media coverage of policy issues, bringing solutions to policymakers, and activating constituents and coalitions to advance policy change. Funders and the media also play major roles in the policy ecosystem. For example, funders regularly convene leaders in policy and make investments that matter for policies and regulations, often through grants awarded to policy intermediaries. The media shape public opinion, promote policy narratives and priorities, and share a relationship with policy intermediaries that is reciprocally influential.

The design of the MFP is responsive to this policy ecosystem. The program seeks to elevate the leadership of scholars who identify as a member of one or more minoritized groups in the academy and to advance the use of equity-centered research on student experience for informing policy. Research evidence is frequently taken up by policy intermediaries, funders, and the media to inform their "understanding of problems, consequences, and potential remedies" (Yanovitzky & Weber, 2020; also see Tseng, 2012); however, examining cases in which research has been used to advance policy reveals that a narrow set of researchers, disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives have disproportionate influence, while others are marginalized. Specifically, research perpetuating deficit and incomplete narratives, relying on primarily quantitative (especially experimental and quasi-experimental) methods used in economics and education policy fields, and largely excluding minoritized scholars' perspectives are particularly impactful. This research has lacked attention to the sociocultural context of the United States and how racialized and gendered practices, policies, and norms in education are *experienced* by students in ways that shape their learning and thriving.

To make progress on these issues, fellows will collaboratively (in groups of two or more fellows) write new narratives about *current* federal and state policy topics; these narratives will build from a broad understanding of multidisciplinary, multi-method, and equity-centered research on how structures

shape student experience. To enhance the effectiveness of new narratives, collaborating fellows will select one or more policy issues to address and strategically aim to reach one or more policy intermediary audiences with these new narratives. Fellows will take part in a professional development curriculum that supports them to (1) choose both the policy topic(s) and policy intermediary audience(s) to target, (2) craft new and compelling equity-centered narratives about current federal and/or state policy topic(s), (3) gain deeper understanding of policymaking and the policy ecosystem, and (4) *begin* the long process of building meaningful relationships with actors in the policy ecosystem (and, in particular, policy intermediaries, funders, and journalists). The program will include periodic virtual networking opportunities and an in-person event at the conclusion of the program in summer 2022 to expose policy intermediaries and funders to the new narratives being advanced by fellows.

Fellows will also complete a scholarly (i.e., academy-facing) deliverable that is relevant to the work of the fellowship and serves their unique professional goals within the academy (e.g., an academic conference panel proposal, a funding proposal, or new course materials). Following the conclusion of the program, SERN and its partners will continue to amplify the fellows' narratives and profiles, as well as more broadly solicit, elevate, and activate insights from fellows about how to advance equity in both scholarship and education policy.

ACTIVITIES

The anchors of the fellowship program – including opportunities to network, engage in professional development activities, and develop deliverables – are described below. Fellows will provide input that influences the construction of the fellowship activities in order to leverage the incoming skills and expertise of fellows and build collective capacity for bridging research and policy (e.g., Alfred, 2002). The opportunities for fellows to inform the fellowship activities are described in the four major components of the fellowship:

- *Developing deliverables:* Fellows will develop collective translational (i.e., policy-facing) and collective or individual scholarly (i.e., academy-facing) deliverables. These deliverables will bridge current policy topics with equity-centered research on the role of structures in shaping student experience:

    - *Translational deliverables:* Fellows will collaborate (in groups of two or more fellows) to propose and develop a new narrative about a current federal and/or state policy issue that is based on equity-centered research about student experience and that targets one or more policy intermediary audiences. With the support of fellowship staff, advisors, and other experts, fellows will decide on the content and format of the deliverables in alignment with the needs and context of the policy intermediary group(s). The deliverables will be used to make progress on how research is taken up within the policy ecosystem and to raise fellows' profiles as leaders with social impact.

    - *Scholarly deliverables:* Fellows will complete an academic deliverable independently or collaboratively (e.g., an academic conference panel proposal, a short funding proposal or LOI, or new course materials) that aligns with the topical focus of the fellowship and raises the fellows' profiles as leaders within the academic community. This deliverable is

intended to be high-impact, manageable in scope, and a natural extension of the other work in the fellowship and should not constitute a new direction or require intense periods of development.

- *Professional development curriculum:* The professional development curriculum will focus on building knowledge about the policy ecosystem and how change happens in education policy, crafting equity-centered narratives about policy-relevant topics, translating complex ideas and discussing research evidence, and establishing the foundations for relationship-building in the policy ecosystem. Fellows will inform (e.g., provide input on the agenda or design) a variety of fellowship activities in the professional development curriculum in order to leverage their skills and leadership and support them to grow their impact in the policy sector. Sample activities could include trainings on translating research persuasively for policy audiences, sessions on mapping the policy ecosystem, or structured opportunities for feedback on deliverables.

- *Network-building:* Fellows will attend periodic virtual networking events (to include, for example, other fellows, fellowship advisors, and leaders from policy intermediaries, philanthropy, and/or the media) which will support fellows to build new connections and gain access to influential actors in policy. Fellows will also attend an in-person event at the conclusion of the program in summer 2022.

- *Amplifying impact post-fellowship:* After the conclusion of the fellowship – and with input from fellows – SERN (as well as fellowship advisors and partners) will elevate fellows' profiles and their new narratives, advance lessons from the fellowship, and promote structural changes in the academy and policy that support the development and usage of equity-centered research at scale. This work will leverage the outputs from the fellowship and seek to make progress on the norms, policies, practices, and relationships that enable this kind of research and strengthen connections between research and policy.

TIMELINE

Application window closes	April 9, 2021 at 5:00pm ET
Applicants notified of decisions	Early May 2021
Applicants provided with optional feedback	June 2021

Fellowship orientation	May 20, 2021 from 1:30pm-3:00pm ET
Fellowship community-building event	June 23, 2021 from 12:00pm-1:00pm ET

• **Summer 2021:**
  ○ Small group conversations to inform the construction of the curriculum
  ○ Summer reading list
• **AY 2021 – 2022:**
  ○ Professional development curriculum
  ○ Virtual networking events
  ○ Translational and scholarly deliverable development
  ○ Prospectuses due for the translational and scholarly deliverables
• **Summer 2022:**
  ○ Final translational and scholarly deliverables due
  ○ In-person event
	Summer 2021 – Summer 2022

Amplifying impact	Post-fellowship

ELIGIBILITY

Open to university and college faculty with a PhD (or equivalent) in the social sciences, education fields, policy fields, or similar who received tenure within the last seven years (i.e., promoted to associate professor on or after January 1, 2014) and:

- Who publish empirical research relevant for students' experience of feeling respected as valued people and thinkers;
- Identify as a member of one or more minoritized groups in the academy; and
- Will reside in the U.S. for the duration of the fellowship.

Full professors who meet the above criteria are eligible to apply.

Applicants who have received concurrent funding or grants are eligible to apply, but due to the significant time commitment fellows are expected to make, we encourage eligible scholars to consider their time and capacity when applying to the MFP.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Applicants should submit the following materials using this link by 5:00pm ET on Friday, April 9, 2021:

- Responses to two short answer questions (up to 300 words to answer each question)
- CV
- A sample of translational or policy-focused work (e.g., a policy brief, an op-ed, a training, a slide deck, an example of work with practitioners, course artifacts, a proposal, an original piece for the application, engagement on social media, etc.)
- A completed budget and budget justification and description of the institution's course buyout policy. We recommend that applicants connect with the budget office at their institutions early in the application process to receive as-needed support and to allow for sufficient time to complete the template.
- A letter of institutional support. We recommend you connect with their letter writer early in the process to allow for sufficient time to complete the letter; the letter should be signed by the representative of the applicant's institution and should be on official letterhead.
    - The letter of institutional support, which may be written by a chair, dean, provost, or other leader from the applicant's institution, should address how the institution would protect the applicant's time during the fellowship (e.g., reducing service requirements, reducing teaching and advising loads). The letter should also speak to the applicant's orientation toward collaboration, which will be a central feature of this fellowship.

Only complete applications will be considered; applications must follow the formatting guidelines and include all relevant application materials as described in this call for applications.

For questions about the application, please contact the SERN Research Team at research@studentexperiencenetwork.org.

SELECTION CRITERIA

In selecting fellowship recipients, the following criteria will be considered:

- Meets eligibility criteria (i.e., received tenure within the last seven years in a relevant discipline or field, identify as a member of one or more minoritized groups in the academy, and conducting relevant research)
- Evidence of institutional support
- Evidence of policy leadership and productive engagement with policy audiences or shows promise for policy leadership and productive engagement with policy audiences
- Evidence of equity-centered approach to research
- Evidence of collaborative orientation

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions can be found here. We invite interested applicants to contact the SERN Research Team at research@studentexperiencenetwork.org with questions about the application materials or call for applications. FAQs are periodically updated with answers to questions that are submitted to SERN. The last update was 4/5/2021.